



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE FUNDAMENTAL IDEAS IN HERDER'S THOUGHT. IV

Chap. II

EXTENSION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF PERSONALITY—*Concluded*

RELATION OF THE THEORY OF ENVIRONMENT TO "VOLKSLITERATUR" AND THE CONCEPTION OF "VOLK"

We have seen that Herder displaced the traditional conception of an absolute, universal reason by that of individual spontaneity, as the primary factor of reality, as the source and standard of all experience, including the activities of reason. Reason is according to Herder derivative, a function of personality, and has to find its conclusive definition and criteria not in its own logic considered as absolute or "transcendental," but in the specific characters of spontaneous individuality.

Herder did not commit the mistake, which was very tempting, of transferring absoluteness from reason to individuality. He saw that individuality was in turn conditioned by relations which were subject to empirical demonstration and control. The sum of these relations is expressed by the term environment.

The theory of environment as a hypothesis of the general conditions of life was not new in the eighteenth century. It dates back to ancient history, where it coincides with the beginnings of exact natural science.¹ Hippocrates made it the subject of a treatise

¹ See the exhaustive and well-written dissertation of Eugénie Dutoit: *Die Theorie des Milieu*. Bern, 1899. After a thorough analysis of Taine's theory of the "faculté maitresse" in its bearing on the theory of environment, Miss Dutoit outlines skilfully and comprehensively the theories of Hippocrates, Aristotle, Bodin, Montesquieu, Augustine, Vico, Buckle, Herder, and others. (See for Herder, pp. 86-87.)

Miss Dutoit's reference to Herder, determined as it was by the focus of her particular inquiry, namely Taine's theory, had to be brief. A special investigation of Herder's theory of environment had long seemed to me desirable. The specific determination of this problem depended, however, on the discovery of the crux of the essential relations between the multitudinous facts of environment considered by Herder, and his fundamental ideas.

My theory of the principle of individuality in Herder's philosophy, which began to take shape about 1904, furnished this crux. In 1907, while conducting a graduate course on Herder, I suggested the subject to Mr. A. H. Koller, one of my students, as a
[MODERN PHILOLOGY, May, 1922]

entitled: *Of Winds, Waters, and Places*. Aristotle was the first to give it a place in his politico-historical theories as a fundamental determinant of political institutions. Bodin, in his *République*, published in 1576, followed Aristotle's teaching, after a long interval of time. This politico-historical conception of environment was further developed by Montesquieu, nearly two centuries later.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century the theory of environment entered upon a new phase. The direction which it took, the definitions of its problems and critical methods which it developed, have continued to the present day with constant acceleration, increase of evidence, and progress of precision in classification and induction. It kept pace with the advance of modern science. Discoveries in physics, chemistry, anatomy, physiology, supplied constantly more specific substance for the emerging hypothesis of the organic unity of all existence.

Zoölogy gradually arranged all the forms of life in an unbroken ascending series. Only before man, the highest form, it assumed an absolute gap. Man was still assumed as a separate creation, the agent of absolute, universal reason, subject to no primary organic or material causation, endowed with his own a priori standards and responsibility and his own transcendental spontaneity and freedom.

This view, which was the logical expression of the rationalistic dualism of Reason and Matter, yielded slowly and reluctantly before the extension of knowledge. Its last empirical support, to which it clung tenaciously, was the supposed absence of the intermaxillary bone in man alone among the higher vertebrates. It was Goethe who in 1783, the year of the completion of the first part of Herder's *Ideen*, demonstrated this final anatomic link between man and the

theme for a course-paper, and subsequently, as a Doctor's thesis. I unfolded my theory of personality and its bearings on Herder's views on environment to my students. I put Miss Dutoit's dissertation into Mr. Koller's hands, thus giving him the orientation and tools required for the proper beginning of his investigation. The first part of this dissertation has recently appeared under the title: A. H. Koller, *The Theory of Environment*, Part I (University of Chicago Dissertation. Menasha, Wis.: George Banta Publishing Co., 1918). In the Preface, in which he gives an account of the development of his study, Mr. Koller fails to mention Miss Dutoit's work, and gives a misleading description of the state of the problem confronting him. The subject, at the time that Mr. Koller was introduced to it, was not, as appears from his description, a primeval wilderness without paths and "guide posts," but an inviting district with its main lines of topography clearly traced and with the points of the compass plainly indicated. Nor was he thrust forth, naked, as it were, but led forward, well equipped and cheered with every proper encouragement and direction.

lower animals. With that discovery, biology, the science of the organic development of life, was born. More than two generations passed, however, before its proper principles of method and technique were established by Darwin.

Goethe's scientific contemporaries, actuated partly by guild pride and prejudice against the non-professional interloper, and dominated by the rationalistic philosophy, refused for many years even to examine Goethe's account of his discovery.

Herder was familiar with the principles and results of the physical sciences of his day as early as 1770, the year of the preparation of his prize essay, "Über den Ursprung der Sprache." He made the biological unity of man with the animals the express basis of his argument.¹ Goethe, in *Dichtung und Wahrheit*,² relates that in the winter of 1770-71 Herder gave him the manuscript of the essay, which was nearly completed, to read, and freely communicated his ideas to him.

Herder's particular contribution to the theory of environment was not any discovery of new physiological facts, but the projection of a new focus, as epoch-making as the hypothesis of biology. By relating the demonstrable facts of physical environment organically to the specific functions of individual spontaneity and so disposing of the current mythologies of static, primary "powers" or "faculties" of the soul, i.e., by joining personality with the physical foundations of life, he took the ground from rationalism and created the modern view of humanism as the fruit of a natural development of personality, whose record is *Geistesgeschichte*, or *Kulturgeschichte*.

The theme of modern humanism is the development of collective forms of human individuality in organic relations to their environment. It is no longer an account of abstract ideas or of detached individuals, but of ethnic groups, of nations, considered as historical, genetic individualities. Herder not only gave the decisive impulse to this advance, but established its principal categories in literature, art, general aesthetics, general history, theology, philology, philosophy, psychology, and political science.

In his interpretation of folk literature, he ignored the specifically physiological bearings of environment, partly because he had already

¹ The essay will be discussed in the next chapter.

² Book 10.

set them forth in his prize essay, partly, no doubt, because it was necessary, in the interest of concentration, to defer comprehensive accounts of their further relations, to separate works, as *Ursachen des gesunkenen Geschmacks*, 1773; *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*, 1774; *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele*, 1774; *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, 1784–91; and others.¹

The particular aim of his studies in folk literature was not a historical account of the actual details of the development, but an inductive analysis of the essential qualities of folk literature as it was. For this purpose, environment took the function not so much of specific organic cause, but rather of formal index of individualization. It was sufficient to relate the various elements of folk individuality to the corresponding main classes of environment.

Herder had formulated some classes of environment in *Fragmente über die neuere deutsche Litteratur*, his first essays of note, published 1767, under the following heads:² external nature; national history; national spirit, prejudices, taste; religion; social and political conditions of life; character of language, particularly its characteristic idioms, which he calls *Idiotismen*, including local speech or dialect.

These classes recur, substantially unchanged, as the chief focuses of individualization, in his essays on folk literature, including drama and narrative forms as well as lyrical poetry. The progress of these later essays lies in the greater accuracy of illustration, finer discrimination of particulars and deeper comprehension of essentials, and especially in evidence of his gradual escape from remnants of Rousseau's and Hamann's mystical doctrine of the primitive perfection of man, which, if interpreted literally,³ is incompatible with a historical view of development based upon the theory of environment.

In *Shakespeare*, Herder again sums up the chief classes of creative environment: "History, *Zeitgeist*, manners, opinions, language,

¹ These will be discussed in the next chapter.

² *Fragmente*, Zweite Sammlung, chaps. i–vii. These early essays reveal the influence of Montesquieu and Rousseau in a paradoxical combination. See the last section of this chapter.

³ As it was not really interpreted by Rousseau, notwithstanding the apparently universal critical opinion concerning the latter's teaching. See my forthcoming paper on "The Problem of Romanticism" and the last section of this chapter.

national prejudices, traditions, and fads furnish the proper material for a living drama. The form is of secondary importance."

And again, in the same essay: "History, tradition, manners, religion, spirit of the era, of the people, of its emotions, of its language. . . ." Farther on he adds "spirit of particular locality" (*Lokalgeist*).

He says in *Ossian*:

You laugh at my enthusiasm for the savages almost as Voltaire did at Rousseau, who, he said, liked so much to walk on all fours. But do not think that I therefore scorn our virtues of manners and morals. The human race is destined for a progress of scenes, of education, of manners. Woe! to the man who is displeased with the scene in which he is to appear, act, and live. But woe! also to the philosopher who, in making theories on mankind and manners and morals, knows only his scene and judges the first scene always as the worst. If *all* belong to the whole of the progressive drama, *each* must display a *new* and *notable side* of mankind. Take care, lest I visit on you presently a psychology drawn from Ossian's poems.

And in another passage: The modern man can gain nothing by trying to imitate the native simplicity of the ancients. By the laws of individuality and spontaneity he also must be true to himself as the savages were true to themselves.

If a modern young poet finds that his dominant powers are intellectual, and that such are required by his subject and type of poetry, he will have to consider the subject and content of his poem so fully and clearly and order it so plainly, that the words are, as it were, sculptured upon his soul. But if his poem calls for a rushing forth of passion and emotion, or if this type of powers is the readiest and most potent impulse in his soul, he should yield to the fire of the auspicious hour and speak and bewitch.

It is important to note that Herder makes no essential distinction between ancient folk poetry and purely intellectual poetry, provided they have the characters of spontaneity and individuality in common. The latter are his principal criteria.

Particular stress should fall on the view, expressed in the passage just quoted, that spontaneity is not repugnant to critical self-consciousness,¹ provided that the latter serve the purposes of spontaneous individuality. Only those forms of critical self-examination

¹ This problem of spontaneity as naïveté is one of the principal factors in the conflict between the myth of the Golden Age and the theory of organic development. See last section of this chapter.

which thwart and pervert spontaneity and folk individuality are rejected by him.

He asserts in another passage in *Ossian*:

All "unpoliced" [i.e., spontaneous] peoples sing and act. They sing what they act. Its songs are the archives of a people, the treasury of its science and religion, of its theogony and cosmogony, of the deeds of its fathers and events of its history, the impress of its heart, the pictures of its domestic life, in joy and sorrow, at the marriage bed and at the grave. . . . There they all paint, they all reveal themselves as they are. The warlike nation sings deeds, the tender, love. The intellectually keen peoples compose riddles, the imaginative folk allegories, similes, living pictures. A warmly passionate people can sing only of passion, as a people placed in terrible circumstances can create only terrible gods. A little collection of such songs out of the mouth of each people, dealing with the principal objects and actions of its life, in its own speech, properly interpreted and accompanied with its tune—how much life would it give to all those particulars for which the readers of travelers' accounts are most eager, namely the mental characteristics and the manners of a nation. Of its science and language! Of play and dance, music and teachings concerning its gods! Of all these we should win, from such a collection or from a lord's prayer cast in such speech, a much better conception than from the babble of a traveler. As natural history describes plants and animals, so in their songs peoples describe themselves.

From the spontaneous songs of a folk we

gain above all concrete conceptions, and by comparing these songs as to language, contents, sounds, and, particularly, as to their cosmogonies and histories of the fathers, we could form many and reliable conclusions as to their origins, propagation, and intermingling.

Even in Europe, which is very densely populated, there are a number of nations whose literary sources are entirely neglected. Esthonians and Letts, Wends and Slavs, Poles and Russians, Frisians and Prussians, have many songs which have not been collected as have been those of the Icelanders, the Danes, the Swedes, not to speak of the English, the Scots and Britons, and the southern peoples. And yet there are among the former so many persons whose office and task it is to study the language, manner, mental character, old prejudices, and customs of each nation! By doing it properly they would give to other nations the most living grammar, the best dictionary and natural history of their peoples. Only they must give it as it is, in the original language and with sufficient interpretation, not spoiled and debased, nor beautified and refined; if possible, with the original tunes and all the accompaniments pertaining to the life of the people.

In *Shakespeare*, after characterizing the classical Greek drama he concludes: The classical French dramatists tried to imitate the classical Greek drama in a changed world. They tried to graft Greek native simplicity on modern complexity and sophistication, with the result that the product was neither modern nor classical art but a pretense and perversion. French "classicism" was pseudo-classicism, because it did not rise from the conditions of national life and character.

The truly classic dramatist coming next after the Greeks is Shakespeare, because his drama is really indigenous. "Shakespeare found about him nothing less than simplicity of native manners, deeds, impulses, and historical traditions." He did not try, as the French classical drama did, merely to introduce some variations into the traditional art. "He found no simple character of people and nation but a multiplicity of classes, conditions of life, states of mind, peoples, and languages." "He took history as he found it and through his creative pains combined the most variegated material into a miraculous unity." "It is particularly the new, the first, the fundamentally different things, which reveal the original power of [the dramatist's] vocation."

In the drama, as in lyrical poetry, Herder advises his German contemporaries, if they wish to learn by examples, to turn to Shakespeare rather than to the Greeks, because the world and character of Shakespeare's plays are much more akin to them than those of the Greeks. "Shakespeare teaches, moves and informs northern man." "Stand before his scene as you stand before a sea of events, where rolls roaring wave upon wave." "His plays have living individuality and local character [*Lokalgeist*] from beginning to end."

England, he continues, accomplished its political unity long before his own age at a time when Germany was still far from a common national consciousness; and so the former produced a national literature. All the ancient wealth of the English tongue, he declares, is being recovered. In Germany, on the other hand, little is done for folk song and no more for the old knightly poetry. Only the Manesse manuscript has been used in Bodmer's edition of *Songs by One Hundred and Forty Minnesingers of the Swabian School*, published in Zürich, 1758-59. But that example has led to no tradition

of collecting folk songs such as exists in England. Most of the works of that age which have been collected reflect Romanic influences. But even in them the German elements have not been studied.

He recommends Percy's *Reliques* as the best model for a collection of national folk songs. He praises Bürger, whose *Lenore*, inspired by the *Reliques*, had caused a literary sensation, as one who has profited by the example of Scotch folk song. But he scorns the "bardic squall" (*Bardenwindsbraut*) of the inferior imitators of Klopstock, men like Kretschmann, who wrote under the name of Ringulph, because they mistook a narrow and false, egotistic-nationalistic caricature for the true folk character.¹

Klopstock he regards as a true, if minor folk singer, in an interesting passage of literary criticism. He says that Klopstock "rarely [treats] complete subjects," but rather "small traits taken from these subjects, rarely complete duties, actions, and images, figures [*Gestalten*] of the heart, but rather fine shades, often mere 'intermediate shades,' of emotions." His songs are *therefore* "not always songs of the people." Yet they embody many important qualities of folk poetry; "and the boldest song by Klopstock, full of abrupt transitions and inversions, taught to a child and properly sung by it a few times, is certain to mean more to it and to remain more deeply and permanently implanted in its mind, than the most dramatic commonplace about love, in which no connective or conjunction and no intermediate idea is omitted."

Since Herder's method of characterizing folk poetry in terms of environment depended for correctness of results on the authenticity of his sources, it sometimes happened that conclusions in themselves correct and instructive were yet contrary to fact. He, like his contemporaries, was misled into the assumption that MacPherson's poems, collected under the title *Ossian*, which were inspired by ancient Celtic legends, were, as MacPherson pretended to a too literal public—and himself undoubtedly believed, possessed as he must have been by the vision of inner identities characteristic of the symbolistic type of mind revealed in his poems—literally a collection of old folk songs, like Percy's *Reliques*; and so based on them

¹ See his review, published 1772; Suphan's edition of his *Sämmtliche Werke* (SSW.), V, 334 ff.; also pp. 330-34.

his analysis of the folk character of the ancient Celts, particularly the Scots. He contrasts *Ossian* with some old Scandinavian songs, and concludes that the Scandinavians were "no doubt a wilder, more rugged people than the gentle, idealized Scots" [!]. "I know," he continues, "no song of the former peoples in which flow gentle emotions; their course passes over rocks and ice and frozen earth."

He, in common with his contemporaries, was also unaware that much of the Scaldic poetry, representing as it does a late, over-sophisticated, and degenerate type of Norse poetry, could no more satisfy his tests of *Volksmässigkeit* than that part of contemporary poetry which he condemned. His conclusion as to the actual folk character of the ancient Scandinavians is therefore also subject to modification.

But such errors, since they do not arise from his method of analysis but from an accidental flaw in the authenticity of his material, do not vitiate the former.

ENVIRONMENT AND LITERARY FORM

Herder's view involved, as we have seen, the conviction that form is a specific and organic part of individuality, and therefore subject to no independent rules, but to the criteria of individual or "characteristic" consistency. This conclusion was misunderstood by a long succession of theoretic critics of Herder, as an assertion of the *exclusive* validity of the criteria of characteristic expressiveness, involving the rejection of the requirement of formal beauty.

Friedrich Schlegel seems to have been the first to give currency to this judgment. In 1796, he published a review¹ of the seventh and eighth collections of Herder's *Humanitätsbriefe*, which had appeared in the same year, and in which were summed up Herder's conclusions regarding the "spirit and value of modern poetry." The gist of Friedrich Schlegel's criticism is contained in the last passages of his review:

The *result* is the denial that the poesies of different times and peoples can be compared; and even that there is a *universal standard* of values. But has this been proved?—Even if there exists no faultless attempt to

¹ In Reichardt's *Deutschland*, Vol. III, Berlin, 1796, ninth number. Reprinted in J. Minor's edition (*Friedrich Schlegel, 1794–1802. Seine prosaischen Jugendschriften*, Hrg. v. J. Minor, Wien, 1882), II, 41–48.

classify poetry, is such a classification altogether [*überhaupt*] impossible?—The *method* of considering every flower of art only according to space, time, and species, *without regard to values*, would in the end lead to no other result except that everything had to be what it was and is.¹

This criticism lays the charge of aesthetic naturalism against both Herder's method of individualization and principle of form.

Naturalism in art and literature is the doctrine that both substance and form must be an immediate and literal, or at least the most immediate and literal possible, expression of actuality, and particularly of the creative and formal elements of the environment.

The Storm-and-Stress movement, proclaiming the exclusive principles of "characteristic" art and "local color," lay open to Friedrich Schlegel's criticism. His shallow identification of a one-sided and immature doctrine with Herder's great conception has exerted an undeserved influence on literary criticism to the present day.

Schlegel's criticism had its motives in his idolization of Goethe, which was just entering upon its most extravagant and characteristically subjective stage, and in the conflicts involved in the rupture between Herder and Goethe, which had just been consummated. Herder, who was out of patience with Goethe's reversion to the Schiller-Kantian form of pseudo-classicism, had said in the *Humanitätsbriefe* reviewed by Schlegel, that "Goethe had approached the form of the ancients through an 'indifferent' [*teilnahmlose*], exact description of visual reality and an active representation of his characters." It was the reproach contained in the attribute "indifferent," which, as is indicated by a parenthetical note in the review, stung Schlegel's partisan devotion into resentment. It is not impossible that Goethe, who stood in need of justification of his breach with Herder, which involved a breach with his own creative motive that had been dominant since his Strassburg days in 1770, was not unwilling to accept the championship of Schlegel, and did not scrutinize very closely the latter's argument.

Goethe and Schiller, however, joined with the charge of naturalism another one incompatible with the former and equally unjust, namely that of an odious ethical dogmatism. This contradiction strengthens the suspicion that the main motives of the estrange-

¹ Minor, *op. cit.*, p. 48. The italics are Schlegel's.

ment lay in regions more profound than those of theoretic discourse. Is it unlikely that Goethe felt a vague unwilling discomfort, akin to artistic remorse, rising from his repudiation of the deepest impulses of his poetical nature?

Herder's principle of organic individualization was the opposite of Schiller's Kantian doctrine of the *reine Formen*. Agreement was impossible, and affections took sides with views. It is the tragic folly of men, great as well as small, that they complicate antagonisms which are beyond control, with pride and resentment, to the grievous hurt of all.

Occasionally, but chiefly in passages of rhetorical generalities, Herder seems guilty of the naturalistic fault of interpreting environment as the immediate agent in producing particular literary forms. At one time he says of the classical Greek drama:¹ "The artfulness of its rules was not art [i.e., deliberate contrivance] but nature; simplicity of the fable² was unity of the action which passed in review before the Greeks, and which under the prevailing conditions of time, fatherland, religion, and manners could not be different." But in the main, and particularly in his specific conclusions, he confined himself consistently to the mediate relationship between the organic conditions and the formal expressions of personality. The formal functions of environment became thus the indirect yet specific factors of individualization.

As everything in the world changes, so changed also the particular nature which created the Greek drama. The constitution of the world, manners, conditions of the republics, traditions of the heroic age, religious faith, even music, expression, standards of illusion changed, and with them, as a matter of course, also material for dramatic plots, occasions for composition, and purposes.³

He selected German translations of foreign works of literature, which were a large and important part of the literary output of the time, as particularly fitted for tests of his formal conclusions. A comparison of different methods of form with various types of environment were likely to lead to definite results. A large number of his ideas on this subject are scattered through his *Fragmente*,

¹ *Shakespeare*.

² The term is used in the dramaturgic sense.

³ *Shakespeare*.

especially the first two collections. They reappear in a more coherent form in his *Briefwechsel über Ossian und die Lieder alter Völker*, which was occasioned by Denis' translation of MacPherson's *Ossian* into German hexameters. Starting with the observation that the "original utterance of a wild mountain people" is out of harmony with the form of the translation, he develops many interesting and important conclusions regarding the specific relations between environment and literary forms. The temptation is great to collect and classify all these details. But since the subject of the present essays is the exposition of Herder's fundamental ideas and not his aesthetic theories in detail, the latter will have to wait their turn.

It will suffice to quote the passage in which he gives a universal expression to his rejection of formal naturalism. He says:

Space and Time are properly nothing in themselves. They are matters merely relative to being, action, passion, sequence of ideas and measure of attention within and without the soul. Have you, good time-keeper of the drama, never had times in your life when hours became moments, and days, hours; and, contrariwise, when hours became days, and night-vigils, years? Have you never been in situations when your soul dwelt wholly without you, here, in the romantic room of your beloved, there, at that stark corpse, here in this oppression of external, shameful want—and when it flew out beyond world and time, leaped over spaces and cosmic regions, forgetting everything about itself and living in the heaven, in the soul, in the heart of him whose being at that time took the place of your own?¹

Herder obliterates the artificial division, but not the proper distinction, between substance and form. He denies the possibility of comprehending and judging form apart from the genetic individuality which actuates it. Every application of a rule of form is with him a new development and refinement of it, because each application involves a reference to a new particular character of individuality. Every principle of form is thus not a fixed item in a general static formula, but a further stage in the growth of a living reality revealed by the proper method of induction in accordance with the law of agreement. Form is part of the ceaseless but ordered flux of organic life. The final decision lies, however, with the individual critic only in so far as he is borne out by the permanent judgment of the particular folk individuality of which he is a part and mouthpiece.

¹ In *Shakespeare*.

The validity of Herder's judgments rests in the first place on the correctness of his interpretations of the individualizing functions of environment. He warns against both false limitations and over-generalizations. He protests, as we have seen, against the narrow egotistic-nationalistic view represented by the *Bardenwindsbraut* of his age, and against the confusion of the folk with both the mob and the "pedants" and the oversophisticated class generally. He also scorns the mere curiosities and externalities gathered in travelers' tales. He seeks the deeper, symptomatic significance of details. There may be found, he says,¹ profound likenesses in apparently opposite conditions. Essential identity of representative utterance or act must imply essential identity of individuality. If it should appear

that Sappho and a Lithuanian girl sang of love in the same manner, surely, then, the rules governing their song must be true; for then they must be rooted in the nature of love and reach to the ends of the earth. If Tyraeus and an Icelandic intone their battle songs in the same manner, then their poetic forms must be true, because they reach from one end of the earth to the other.

Herder was not a betrayer of beauty. On the contrary, it was he, above all men of his generation, who rescued it from the lifeless formalism of rationalism or pseudo-classicism and transplanted it into the rich and living ground of his conception of genetic individuality. One has to read only the tenth book of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* to realize how clearly he was recognized as the herald of the new vision of beauty, the awakener of the most gifted among the young generation of Germany, including Goethe. Goethe came to Strassburg, restive yet captive in the bondage of Leipzig rationalistic convention; he left it, less than a year later, in full career toward the greatest modern achievement in letters. All his greatest works, his most beautiful songs, his best dramas, his novels, including his *Wilhelm Meister* in its most vital parts, and above all, his *Faust*, were the fruits of ideas, partly released, but to no small part begotten, by Herder's teaching. By acquiescing in the flimsy misjudgment of Friedrich Schlegel and abandoning Herder, he deserted for a time his own truest self.

¹ *Ossian*.

Herder cannot be charged with responsibility for the Storm and Stress. He was more distressed and irritated than Goethe by the crudeness and ugliness of the products of that movement, which was the turbulent expression of a group of immature, and for the most part inferior talents, who by the immoderation of their tempers, their inadequate knowledge and judgment, and their violent egotism, would have caricatured and did caricature any conception of the age, no matter how profound and true.

In one of his best utterances, his prize essay *Über die Ursachen des gesunkenen Geschmacks*,¹ which belongs to the same period as the essays on folk literature, Herder has expressed his unmistakable condemnation of the Storm-and-Stress movement on account of the very fault which Friedrich Schlegel and Goethe and Schiller attributed to him. After stating that there is a doctrine abroad which insists that genius requires no training and would only suffer in its originality from a study of the best models, especially the ancients, he continues:

An evil demon invented this principle, which is the ugliest untruth. A genius that would be spoiled by taste! Let it pass away! Better that it should perish now than live to corrupt others. He that is corrupted by knowledge of the ancients—let him be corrupted! He has nothing to lose. They are always appealing to Shakespeare. What of Shakespeare? Had he no taste, no rules? More than anyone else; but they were the taste of *his*² time, the rules for that which *he* could accomplish. Had he with his genius lived in the times of the ancients, does anyone believe that he would have fought against taste?

There are other passages in the same vein, in others of his works. But this quotation may suffice.

Herder did not teach that beauty is secondary, but that its primary seat is in specific individuality, to which form is secondary. Form as such has neither meaning nor beauty. Only form instinct with beautiful and significant individuality is beautiful and significant. Beauty and significance organically combined are his postulates for art and literature.

As to significance, Herder rejected the rationalistic interpretation of it as an abstraction constituted of ratiocinative ideas, as well as

¹ First edition 1773, second, 1775.

² The emphasis is Herder's.

the naturalistic Storm-and-Stress view that a literal acceptance and reproduction of actuality alone bears the impress of truth. In determining this conception he resorted again to the inductive method. He sought the selective agent or principle not in discursive formulas, nor in a fixed direction of attention toward literal fact, nor finally in an arbitrary subjective preference, such as romanticism was soon to proclaim, but in the permanent historical verdict of a people.

The same method he applied to the formal principles of beauty. Not only what mattered, but also in what form it properly mattered, i.e., what form embodied the proper principles of beauty in fullest harmony with the specific substance of each individual matter, this question also he brought before the tribunal of permanent, historical, integral folk judgment.

He gave an entirely new meaning to taste or poetic-artistic judgment. Like its functions, so taste itself has neither absolute existence nor absolute validity. Taste itself is in turn a function of the whole organism of the mind and with the latter organically conditioned.¹

To sum up: Herder discovered the genetic criteria of substance and form of literature and art in their specific relations to each other and in their organic unity within particular individuality. The pseudo-classical formalism of Schiller and Goethe in the last decade of the century was a temporary reversion to a doctrine which Herder had disposed of a score of years before.

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MYTH OF THE GOLDEN AGE AND THE THEORY OF HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Herder's conception of folk personality is, as we have seen, a combination of a twofold induction, one part of which is derived from an analysis of the formal characteristics of representative folk utterance, and the other from a historical account of the principal genetic conditions of particular folk individualities. The unity of this combination is assured by his interpretation of form as an index of individuality, i.e., by his subordination of form to personality.

¹ See the next chapter.

There appear in passages and summaries drawn in this chapter from Herder's works, a number of terms, phrases, and judgments, which seem to betray a fundamental division among his conclusions. In several passages in *Ossian*,¹ he seems to accept Rousseau's and Hamann's ideal of the "natural man," the primitive savage untouched by the disintegrating self-consciousness and intellectuality of civilization, as the perfect type of personality. This natural man is supposed to be in spontaneous, unreflective, faultless command of the totality of the faculties of man, spiritual, ethical, and physical. The intellect, interpreted as ratiocinative self-consciousness, is condemned as the destroyer of this spontaneous harmony. Its arrival in the history of man is the moment of his fall.

This "natural man" is the eighteenth-century form of the pagan ideal of perfection embodied in the myth of the Golden Age. In the detailed elaboration of their versions of this universal myth, however, both Rousseau and Hamann were influenced by their intense devotion to Christianity. They found in the story of the Garden of Eden, in the sinfulness of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and in the misery resulting from the fall, divine confirmation of their ideal of man and of their condemnation of rationalism. The discursive reason becomes Satan in the theology of Rousseau and Hamann.

Herder, primarily as an imaginative man gifted with the symbolic vision of mythology, and secondarily as a theologian, was at first strongly attracted to Rousseau's and Hamann's myth. We can distinguish four periods in his attitude toward it. During the immature years of the *Fragmente*, he was, as indicated by the *Fragmente*,² strongly influenced by the naturalistic or pagan part of Rousseau's doctrine. He based his literary principles almost exclusively on classical, especially Greek, and on ancient oriental, as he characteristically called Old Testament, literatures. In the next period, comprising his travels, his visit to Strassburg, and the early part of his residence in Bückeberg, from about 1770-73, he was still more alienated from the theological point of view, going even so far as to deny the immortality of the soul. He became absorbed in

¹ See the first part of this chapter, *Modern Philology*, November, 1921, pp. 124-29.

² Including his literal interpretation of the four ages of language.

the investigations of the relations between the physiological and biological environment and the mind of man, laying down his first conclusions in the essay on the *Origin of Language*, his most important work of the first part of this period. The latter part of this period was devoted to the continuation of his studies of folk literature and led to a gradual substitution of the historical view for the fallacy of the Golden Age. Among the essays which are the subject of this chapter, *Ossian* shows more traces of the myth than the others. *Shakespeare* is almost free from them.

The third period covers the remainder of his stay in Bückeburg until his removal to Weimar. Under the influence of his duties and associations as court preacher he developed an interest and a theological belief in the story of the Garden of Eden. He produced, beside important theological polemics against rationalism in religion, his *Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts* and *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, which latter contains the germs of the *Ideen*. Both are serious and ambitious, yet his least satisfactory and profitable works, because they express beside much that is valuable and profound, an illogical tendency to force a literal acceptance of the story of the Garden of Eden upon the interpretation of history.

After his escape from the intellectual and imaginative isolation in Bückeburg, in 1776, however, and with the beginning of his intimate contact with the richest mental environment of the age, in Weimar, he rapidly regained his clarity. In his *Ideen*, in which he completed his ideas of the conditions of historical development, the genetic view held exclusive sway.

In Herder's conception of folk personality and folk literature the crucial terms in which the conflict between the myth of the Golden Age and the theory of historical development is manifested in its essence, are spontaneity and the conditions of individuality. The conflict involves analogous divergences in the interpretation of each.

Individuality, in the myth, would be not merely a primary fact of concrete reality but an absolute datum, proceeding directly and inscrutably from the hand of the Creator. Rousseau could consider the environment represented by changed conditions of human society only as hostile to the primal perfection of man. Particular individuality, the product of specific factors in the continuous change of

environment, and the primary fact of Herder's view of reality, appeared to Rousseau as a form of sinfulness and loss of original integrity, symbolized, theologically, in the fall, and philosophically, in the inner division marked by the rise of critical self-consciousness.

Spontaneity, the volitional expression of individual integrity, must be, and is, in the myth consistently interpreted as the unconscious push of the totality of individual being, i.e., the opposite of action involving analytic judgment. This conception, which was to become one of the chief tenets of later romanticism, limits spontaneity to the function of a blind and passive, integral momentum wholly beyond scrutiny and control. The historical view, on the other hand, must regard spontaneity as an organic combination of all the principal functions of individuality, including ratiocination. In the myth, spontaneity is an absolute, mystical, primary unit, withdrawn beyond the limits of any save "transcendental," or speculative, analysis; in the genetic view, it is an organic harmony of different "powers" or "faculties" (as the terms were in the eighteenth century), or functions, and so amenable to empirical analysis. In the former, ingenuousness and naïveté appear as primary and indispensable ignorance and unconsciousness of self; in the latter, as the highest forms of knowledge and possession of self in a unity of idea and expression which is the product of the most comprehensive and appropriate synthesis possible of sensation, emotion, imagination, and ratiocination. The mythical form of spontaneity dwells at the absolute beginning, at the mystical divine fountain head of life; the genetic, at the historical point of greatest fulness and co-ordination of the principal energies of being.

Spontaneity is thus the definitive concrete evidence of individuality; and the method of interpreting its composition, the specific index of each of the two opposite views.

The genetic conception was decisive in Herder's view of the conditions of individuality. It was dominant in his main conclusions even amid the mythological rhetoric of the *Fragmente*. In his prize essay on the *Origin of Language*, he had given an exhaustive outline of his theory of organic psychology, which remained, essentially unchanged, throughout his subsequent works the basis of his account of individuality. As to his conception of spontaneity in folk literature, it is

sufficient to recall the conclusive passage¹ in which he insists that a modern poet, in order to become a true folk poet, must carefully analyze and judge the character of his poetic subject; and that even an "intellectual" theme may become true folk poetry provided the analysis embodied in its composition be an appropriate expression of its inherent intention.

Immediately after, partly even during, his studies of folk literature, he returned to renewed and exhaustive investigations of organic psychology. His most important results appeared in *Ursachen des gesunkenen Geschmacks*, a prize essay, published in 1773 and again in 1775; and *Vom Erkennen und Empfinden der menschlichen Seele*, published 1774, 1775, and again, much revised, in 1778.

His conceptions of environment attained to complete and final expression in his *Ideen*. In the first part, on which he began writing in October, 1782, and which was published Easter, 1784, he sums up his position thus: Man is a product of nature. The laws of history are therefore the laws of nature. "Even spirit and morality are physics."²

The mass, the continuity and consistency, and the specific definition of his genetic theory, together with the express assertion of inclusiveness contained in the *Ideen*, present an evidence so overwhelming that the early lapses should be ignored as irrelevant and temporary. Herder-at-the-goal himself has corrected Herder-on-the-way. The remnants of the myth of the Golden Age, which can be discovered in his essays on folk literature, should be understood in the main as expressions of a rhetorical enthusiasm cast in the forms of current and graphic symbols of naturalness and simplicity. As regards particularly the identification of the formal virtues of folk poetry, namely, vividness, concreteness, choice of substantive terms, originality, authenticity, economy, simplicity, perception of essentials, unity, and force,³ with a state of primeval naïveté, innocent of any trace of ratiocination, this manifest absurdity disappears if it is taken not literally but as a personification of the qualities which the same method of analysis that underlay his genetic view had revealed as the characteristic expression of folk personality.

¹ P. 365 above.

² *Auch Geist und Moralität sind Physik.*

³ See my summary on pp. 124 ff. of the first part of this chapter, *Modern Philology*, November, 1921.

The original and permanent substance of his interpretation of folk literature lies in these characterizations and is not affected by flurries of doctrine. We have but to bear in mind that in the *Fragmente*, and also, though less explicitly, in the essays on folk poetry, he counted not only the authors of the ancient folk ballads, epics, and mythologies, but also those of the Old Testament and classical Greek poetry, including Homer and Sophocles, among the savages and primitives, in order to realize that his use of these terms was metaphorical.

The positive motive of the myth of the Golden Age is the universal longing, which is most potent and creative among the highly gifted peoples, for a state of perfection and complete harmonious unity of being. This longing antedates history and must have been coeval with the first stir of intelligence. It has brought with it, in every known embodiment, as its negative correlative, a fixed aversion to ratiocination. The discursive understanding is in all these myths the divider, the destroyer of unity and innocence, the tempter, the enemy of perfection. In all mythologies from the time of the story of the Garden of Eden until the present, it has been in one form or another characteristic of the principle of Evil. The revolt of the eighteenth century against rationalism, which by its shallow and tyrannical formalism had become odious and intolerable to imaginative and creative natures, revived the ancient myth. It was but natural that in the resentment and heat of conflict the negative animus of the myth should have become now and then unduly prominent.

This abounding animus was shared by Herder, and, joined with the quick pugnacity of his temperament, broke forth now and then during the earlier years of his critical activity, in polemical exaggerations. His praises of the perfection of savages and primitives, his reliance on the intuitions of "unverdorbene Kinder, Frauenzimmer, Leute von gutem Naturverstande"¹ sprang from the rhetorical desire for telling contrast with the empty sophistication and formalism of the "pedants" of contemporaneous rationalism.

The theological phase of this polemical ardor, which is attested by his *Letters on the Study of Theology*, the records of his religious

¹ *Ossian*, chap. viii.

campaign against rationalism, accounts for the passages in *Über die älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts* and *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, in which historical reality is attributed to the story of the Garden of Eden.

There is, however, a deeper view in which the contradictions between the historical and the mythological account are reconciled. A myth, so universal and persistent as that of the Golden Age, must contain an essential truth.

The crucial difference between the two accounts is that of the particular point at which each places the state of perfection within the order of the events of human history. The myth sets perfection at the absolute beginning, the genetic account at a later point. In the former every later epoch is the product of a division, a break-up of the primary divine unity; in the latter, the sum of the accumulations of a process of organic development. In the former, the present is always a minus, which must keep on growing less throughout the future; and the past, at the beginning of time, can alone be the home of spiritual longing. In the latter, the present is ever another way station forward, and the future instead of the past is the warder of the Golden Age and the Garden of Eden.

The historical is the objective order of events in their actual sequence. The mythological is the inner order of the unfolding of self-consciousness. In the latter every previous state appears as unity and simplicity, every subsequent stage as division, continually, throughout an endless chain of unity broken by division, and ever again unity followed by division. The order of self-consciousness is the reverse of that of objective events. The myth of the Golden Age is, within its proper order, as objective and true as history. It becomes false only if it is removed from the inner to the historical order; if its focus of vision is by hypostasis superimposed upon that pertaining to the literal order, with the result that both the highest and the lowest stages in the development of man are regarded at the same time as the starting-point and the goal, as the primary and the ultimate term.

The confusion of the two orders of thought, the literal and the metaphorical, is the principal characteristic of a rudimentary stage of historical perspective, such as prevailed at the time of Herder's

beginning. It was he who, throughout a long series of progressive studies, developed the fundamental principles of modern history, which are those of the literal genetic order. An overwhelmingly heavy burden of proof rests on those, who, instead of ignoring the traces left by the passing age in his early ideas, and thus harmonizing his immature ideas with the clear and permanent principles of his mature thought, would load him with responsibility for a confusion which the major trend of his work did more than the endeavor of any of his contemporaries, to eradicate.

History, in the meaning created by Herder, is an account of personality, inductively conceived as spontaneity embodied in forms progressively collective, in accordance with the growth of knowledge of the genetic relation between environment and individual life. Its final aim is to combine all the various stages of individuality into an organic conception of humanity, which is to serve each individual not as an absolute and fixed standard of truth, value, and beauty, but as the guiding principle in the discovery and development of his best powers.

Unser Verstand ist nur ein Verstand der Erde, aus Sinnlichkeiten, die uns hier umgeben, allmählich gebildet; so ist's auch mit den Trieben und Neigungen unseres Herzens; eine andre Welt kennt ihre äusserlichen Hilfsmittel und Hindernisse wahrscheinlich nicht. . . . [Man is the final product of all the history of the earth.] Mancherlei Verbindungen des Wassers, der Luft, des Lichts, mussten vorhergegangen sein, ehe der Same der ersten Pflanzen-organisation, etwa das Moos, hervorgehen konnte. Viele Pflanzen mussten hervorgegangen und gestorben sein, ehe eine Tierorganisation ward; und bei dieser gingen Insekten, Vögel, Wasser- und Nachttiere den gebildeteren Tieren der Erde und des Tages vor; bis endlich nach allen die Krone der Organisation unserer Erde, der Mensch, auftrat, Mikrokosmos. Er, der Sohn aller Elemente und Wesen, ihr erlesenster Inbegriff und gleichsam die Blüte der Erdenschöpfung, konnte nichts andres als das letzte Schosskind der Natur sein, zu dessen Bildung und Empfang viele Entwicklungen und Revolutionen vorhergegangen sein mussten.¹

Further conclusions upon the matters discussed in this chapter have to await an examination of the foundations of Herder's psychology, which is the task of the next chapter.

MARTIN SCHÜTZE

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

¹ Preface to *Ideen*.